

Washington DC Pre-Trip Project		
Unit Topic: Washington DC- Museum	Number of Students: 10+	Subject Areas included: History (STEM and cross-curricular with extensions below)
Grade Levels: Middle School (6th, 7th, 8th), adjustable for older grades	Designer(s): Alexander Purdy	Time Period: 6+ hours in class. Up to 2 weeks of work time at home.

Stage 1 – Desired Results

Overview:

- In reflection of the Washington DC trip, I noted that some middle school students didn't fully interact with the museums and monuments we visited because they lacked some of the background knowledge and skills required to partake in a museum, self-paced environment. I wanted to create a project that made their experience more meaningful and enriching. I designed this project so that they could not only prepare background knowledge but also have a deeper appreciation about the places they would visit. When students create, they invest. So by creating a museum, they will invest in their DC experience.

Special Note:

- This project can be adapted to fit any museum or exhibit in Washington DC, as explained below. When I did this with my students, I specifically chose to focus on the Human Evolution exhibit of Natural History because it fit into our curriculum while also preparing students for the upcoming trip. I decided to be more general in regards to this lesson plan and have the museum project to be about Washington DC as a whole.

Rational:

Students answer the following questions...

- What aspects of American history are most important to me?
- How do scientists study and present history?
- How do I interact with a museum and its exhibits?

Students will understand...

- How history relates to themselves
- The work that scientists do to study history
- Behaviors that are appropriate when touring a museum

Students will be able to/can...

- Find a specific historical or cultural aspect that connects them to American history
- Analyze the presentation of history for historical importance

Students will value...

- The intensity of the work that went into the curation of the museum and monuments
- The scope of historical events and their context

Objective:

Students will ...

- Create their own museum exhibit to create a deeper emotional tie into the exhibits they explore in Washington DC.

Stage 2 – Assessment Evidence

Assessment/Core Performance Task: Student Curated Museum

Goal: Students will curate an exhibit that is meaningful to them.

Role: Students will act as scientists and museum docents.

Audience: Students will present the museum and all of its exhibits to special guests. In my school, we have Grandparents and Friends day. The students each invited their grandparents and acted as a museum docent presenting each of the exhibits.

Situation: The government has recently commissioned a new Smithsonian Museum. This museum will be dedicated to the history of Washington DC. Scientists from around the world will gather to create exhibits to provide guests with a full DC experience.

Product, Performance, or Purpose: Students will produce a full museum exhibit. This will include an artifact or interactive experience, a written essay/paragraph about their exhibit (placard), and other decorative pieces to make the museum come to life.

Standards and Criteria for Success: See Rubric Below.

Relationship to Stage 1: Students will select a topic that is interesting to them and carry out the work of a scientist. Through the lessons, they will learn about the historical process and how history can be displayed to the public. The importance should be placed on the connection that the student has with their exhibit and the museum as a whole, as the goal of this project is to teach students to positively engage in the learning process in museum settings.

Other Assessment Evidence:

- Each day, the teacher will review important information related to the history and content. Sample questions are listed below in the lesson guides.
- Students will complete a series of check-ins while completing this project.

Stage 3 – Learning Activities

Daily Lesson Guides:

- Unveiling of Project Museum (30 minutes)
 - Start the lesson by getting students excited about this project
 - “Ok everyone- I just have to tell you about the most amazing thing that I just learned. The government has recently commissioned a new Smithsonian Museum. This museum will be dedicated to the history of Washington DC. Scientists from around the world will gather to create exhibits to provide guests with a full DC experience....but wait...there’s more! You all are those scientists.”
 - Hand out the project overview sheet (below).
 - While reading through the information, help them picture what this museum will look like.
 - “You are each going to create your own exhibit explaining the rich history of DC and some of its museums and monuments. In fact, we might even have our very own Washington monument pop-up right here in the middle of the classroom.”
 - We then activate some prior knowledge about museums.
 - How are museums created? Do they just pop up?

- What steps do museum curators take?
 - The list may look something like this:
 - Topic
 - Research
 - Planning
 - Creation of Exhibits
 - Presenting to guests
- Remind them that our “Topic” is Washington DC monuments and museums.
 - I then explain that we are doing our museum on DC because it will help us connect to the trip we will take out there in the spring.
 - Our goal is to create an exhibit that is about something that we are excited to learn or see when we get to DC.
- So, we have our topic. What is the next step?- “Research”
 - All research starts with questions.
 - Have the students brainstorm some questions they have about DC.
 - Tell them that you already have several questions that are going to help guide them to a topic that they are interested in.
- Information Blast (1-2 hours)
 - The objective of the Information Blast is to get students to be thinking about questions that are important to them. Your goal is to give them as much information as possible so that they can weed out the topics they are most interested in.
 - This lesson or two is extremely important to the success of this project. Students should be encouraged to engage.
 - **Classroom Management tip:** I use raffle tickets that I give students when they participate by answering or asking a question. I then collect the tickets with their name on it and raffle off a couple prizes at the end of class.
 - This can quickly turn into a lecture and slides, so be sure to ask questions frequently and choose topics that are high interest.
 - You will do some prep work to prepare for the information blast. Choose 10-15 questions to ask the students. Also, don't forget to include some of the questions that they asked in the previous part.
 - What are the most important monuments in DC?
 - What is the Smithsonian?
 - What were the most important events in America in your opinion?
 - Who is celebrated in our history?
 - Who is villainized in our history?
 - What are some important minority figures in American history? (Picture Racial, Gender, Sexual Orientation, etc. minorities)
 - Which were the most influential presidents?
 - What was the role of clothing in America's history?
 - What government jobs are there in DC?
 - Why is DC not a state?...or in a state?
 - I tell the students that we are going to be doing a large scale discussion in which I am going to through everyone a ton of information. During this process, they are expected to participate and write down 5 topics they would like to research about DC.
 - They will only choose one topic in the end but it is important that they isolate 5 so that they may have back up topics if someone else chooses their own.
 - For each question, you will ask the students for their own response.

- Write their responses on the board.
 - Almost all of the questions lead to other questions
 - Allow for that tangent- this is where some of the deepest connections to learning occurs.
 - Answer that question in real time by looking up the answer. Show them how you use Google (or other search engine) to find an appropriate answer.
 - This skill will come in handy when they do their own research
 - For each question, have one to two slides of answers that you have prepared.
 - Note that their responses were great and that these would be your responses. Try to take them deeper into the content and exploration of DC.
 - If a question pops up for you, model how you think, ask, research, and answer your own question.
 - Modelling shows that you are not an expert either and gives an opportunity to show the learning process.
 - The goal of the information blast is to have students excited about the 5 topics they wrote down. We next have to get them to choose their project.
 - The teacher will write down two lists
 - For the first list, tell students to picture a museum or an interactive learning environment. Ask them to list all of the interactive ways someone could learn.
 - You might write down things like games, movies, artifacts, letters, re-enactments, models, drawing, painting, etc.
 - After the first list, the teacher will superimpose the second list over the first. Call on each student to choose one of their DC topics to pair with one of the interactive exhibit ideas that they generated. Write that student's name and topic next to the exhibit.
 - **Classroom Management tip:** This can get heated as topics and ideas are chosen. I use a set of notecards to randomly select a student.
 - Have the student write their project down in their planner or another sheet of paper so they remember.
- Research (1 hour)
 - After students have chosen their project, they are ready to research their topics and begin generating their ideas. Be very firm that the research must come before they create a visual plan for their exhibit.
 - Have the students write down the following questions to guide their research. Show them that these are the basic 6 "W" questions. This is important because these 6 questions often DO guide our research even when we get to higher level research.
 - When were the important dates to your topic? (if they are doing something on a monument there might be two sets of dates- one for when it was built and one for the event or person it was built for)
 - Who is important to your topic?
 - Why is your topic important to study?
 - Where is your topic located?
 - How has the perspective changed about your topic then versus now?
 - What are some other details that are important about your topic? (at least 5-10 more details).
 - Due to the scope of potential projects, you may have to guide the students with other questions that are not on this list.

- Project Proposal (30 minutes)
 - Students will present their ideas to you as the project manager.
 - **Added flair:** I love to hand out napkins and have them draw out what they picture doing.
 - “All great ideas first start on napkins!”
 - Otherwise, any paper will do just fine
 - Students should be fairly specific in what they plan to do and include a materials list that they can take home.
 - I meet with each student individually to review the plan and modify as needed.
 - Projects should be reasonable to the student ability level and the timeline for completion.
- Project Work Time (??-hours)
 - Students should then be given a reasonable amount of time to complete their projects either at home or at school.
- Student Check-ins (2-5 minutes each student)
 - Check-in each class period with each student to see where they are at in their project.
 - This is generally easier if you have assigned this work to be done at school.
 - I have a check-in for each of the following parts:
 - Exhibit completion
 - Placard completion
 - Extra details (optional)
 - **Added flair:** My students love to have food, a ribbon cutting, a map of the museum, and decorations (birds, picnic benches, lamp posts, and trees) in their museum. I usually give these as extensions or divide them up among all of the students.
 - Review information
 - Each day, quiz the class about the information from other people’s projects.
 - All students are going to be docents for all exhibits so they need to know the information from the other student’s projects.
- Set-up and Practice (1 hour)
 - Set up the museum with the exhibits hosted around the classroom.
 - Don’t forget to name your museum and have a sign welcoming guests in!
 - Before the presentation, students should have a dress rehearsal of the museum.
 - First, I do a run through as if I were their docent.
 - Then, we do a run through were I ask various students questions about each exhibit.
 - Finally, they do a run through in pairs. They each take turns being a docent or switch off each exhibit.
 - **Classroom Management tip:** I give each student 5 tickets. I walk around and each time I hear a student on task and presenting correct information, I give them a ticket. If I catch a pair off task, I take a ticket from each student. I then collect the tickets with their names and draw a winner. The winner gets to be the ribbon cutter for our grand opening.

- Docent Day (1 hour)
 - After your chosen guests have arrived, students match up with a group of the guests and begin the tours.
 - Watch the magic begin!
 - After the guests have left, it is always nice to do a debrief and hear their perspective of their experiences.
 - What did they learn about DC?
 - What are they excited to visit?
 - What was it like being a scientist?
 - What was it like being a docent?
 - What are some things they picture themselves doing while they are at a monument or museum in DC?

Accommodations/Extensions:

- **Special Needs Accommodations**
 - I teach at a school for students with learning differences. I think this type of project based learning is perfect for their learning styles. In order to accommodate their needs I recommend making sure to do the following:
 - Help dictate and type notes/placards for students
 - Create a reasonable expectation for writing (paragraph/sentence versus full essay)
 - Use in-class time to create all aspects of the project rather than sending it home for parents to do.
 - Chunk each step into smaller steps
 - Modify each individual project so that it can
 - Other modifications as needed
- **Extensions**
 - Many students need greater challenges and this project is perfect for them!
 - Be sure that students are choosing a project that has a large enough scope and provides a challenge in its creation
 - For example, I had one particularly gifted student write a book for our museum gift shop that discussed everyone's projects.
 - Ask them to add to the museum in other ways.
 - The museum can be just about as big as your and your students imagination. For students looking for extension, they can add to the museum with their thoughtful creativity.
 - Creating museum maps, audio tours, etc.
- **Cross-curricular and STEM connection**
 - English
 - I involve a lot of our reading and writing interventions into the project; hence, the focus on the placard.
 - Science/STEM
 - Many students can use technology and design methods to create their projects
 - I had one student create a simulated farming irrigation system by using an electronic pump.
 - Math
 - Almost all projects touch on math at some point. A lot of the math we use is measurements and geometry as students design the room and their projects.
 - Arts

- The entire project is arts based as it is designed to be hands on and use the multiple intelligences.

Teacher Reflection/Notes

- **Size and Scope-** This is an exciting project and its level of intensity depends on the staff and students working on the projects.
 - I go all out with my class to make it look like a museum. As one example, I put up black butcher paper on the walls to cover anything that looks like a classroom.
 - We have a full ribbon cutting ceremony.
 - Students are required to dress up on docent day.
 - If a student suggests something to make it more museum like, I generally do it
 - It all goes back to my big idea about what I want this project to be for my kids~ they are creating connections to invest deeper in their Washington DC Field trip. This is a trip that no kids ever forget and now they also get to remember their very own museum.
 - Make this fit your schedule and students! Need to make this smaller?
 - Help create smaller projects for your students
 - Group them up into pairs or teams
 - Reduce the writing aspect
- **Guests-** We use grandparents as our guests because it works well into our calendar schedule but I am sure that you can get other classrooms and administration to be your guests. I usually have a couple kids write personalized letters to the principal and other school officials
- **Behavior Management-** As I noted above, I get a lot of distance out of my ticket system. The students respond well to it but every class has its own unique system that can be molded to this project. Overall, I don't have that many behavioral issues. Infact, I often struggle to transition my students away from their projects. They are excited to create something and often times they choose something that meets them exactly where they need. That optimal challenge range keeps students focused and engaged.
- **Post-Trip-** While it did not match with my personal goals, you could extend this project over the trip. Allow students to do their research in DC and then have them come home and create their exhibits based on what they learned.

Student Work Samples:

Check out the panoramic view of the most recent museum here:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Eus1spNoTh4I3hkeBJtFCSZlCZnvW5po/view?usp=sharing>

Irrigation System Exhibit:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1IPOzmqV4DCLl4XJ73FcN0eu-AR9kQR-T/view?usp=sharing>

Farm Exhibit:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1d1zbd79agFbeBli8EFfUWRPE0GprKkj/view?usp=sharing>

Buffet Exhibit:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1woD0eXE5nK_e9jz5cjo7UzWdpXvmgEXl/view?usp=sharing

COMING SOON!

THE SMITHSONIAN PRESENTS



**The Museum of Washington DC
(Name to be decided...)**

Apply now to be a part of this exciting project! The Smithsonian is looking for highly qualified scientists to take part in a new interactive museum set to capture guests awe and wonder about the exciting history of our nation's capital.

Scientists will be expected to...

- ❖ **Research and create their own exhibit about a high interest and historical topic**
- ❖ **Write an essay detailing the history behind their exhibit**
- ❖ **Help create an overall and professional atmosphere where guests can learn optimally**
- ❖ **Check-in with the museum supervisor frequently to meet deadlines**
- ❖ **Work as part of a team to learn and engage in all museum exhibits**
- ❖ **Act as a museum docent to honored guests, providing a detailed tour of all museum exhibits**

Rubric

	25	20	15	10	0
Research and Pre- Planning	Student gathered a proficient amount of background knowledge in order to create an exhibit plan that was creative and detailed	Students gathered a lot of background knowledge in order to create an exhibit plan that was acceptable	Student gathered some background knowledge in order to create an exhibit plan	Student gathered little background knowledge in order to create an exhibit plan that was disorganized and confusing	Student did not complete this portion of the assignment
Work Ethic and Exhibit	Student created a very strong exhibit with no distractions during work time and completed all of the check-ins on time.	Student created a great exhibit with little distractions during work time and completed all of the check-ins on time.	Student created an exhibit that could have been improved in some areas. Work was completed mostly on time.	Student created an exhibit that could have been improved in quality. Work was not completed on time.	Student did not complete this portion of the assignment
Written Placard	Student demonstrated very deep background knowledge about their exhibit. The placard was structured well and error free.	Student demonstrated a lot of background knowledge about their exhibit. The placard was mostly structured well and error free.	Student demonstrated some background knowledge about their exhibit. The placard had some structural, spelling, or grammar errors.	Student demonstrated little background knowledge about their exhibit. The placard had many errors and was not well structured.	Student did not complete this portion of the assignment
Docent Tours	Student presented each exhibit as an expert. They stayed on topic throughout the entire presentation.	Student presented each exhibit with minor errors. They stayed mostly on topic throughout the entire presentation.	Student presented each exhibit with major errors. They often got off topic during the presentation.	Student presented each exhibit with major errors. They struggled to stay on topic during the presentation.	Student did not complete this portion of the assignment

Total = _____/100